

REMARKS/ARGUMENTS

Favorable reconsideration of this application in light of the previous amendments and following discussion is respectfully requested. Claims 1-16 are pending. By this Amendment the Abstract is replaced with a substitute Abstract and Claims 1-16 are amended to correct informalities noted in the outstanding Action. No new matter is added by any of the amendments.

The Office Action rejects Claims 1-16 under 35 U.S.C. §112, second paragraph. Claims 1, 3, 4, 5 and 6 are amended to obviate this rejection. Claims 3 and 4 are amended to clarify that the amount of plastic deformation gradually decreases in a direction of movement of the planet gear.

The Office Action rejects Claims 1-16 under 35 U.S.C. §103(a) over USP 6,216,972 to Rohrle in view of USP 5,971,489 to Smithson et al. This rejection is respectfully traversed.

Before considering the rejection under 35 U.S.C. §103(a), it is believed that a brief review of the subject matter of independent Claim 1 would be helpful. Independent Claim 1 is directed to a seatbelt retractor. A take-up drum includes webbing wound around it. A torsion bar is fitted in the take-up drum and has a first end coupled to a first end of the take-up drum. A ratchet wheel is coupled to a second end of the torsion bar. An emergency locking member is operative in the event of a vehicle emergency to be locked to the ratchet wheel to stop the rotation of the ratchet wheel. Stopping the rotation of the ratchet wheel stops the rotation of the take-up drum in a direction in which the webbing is paid out. The torsion bar is twistingly deformed when the webbing is further paid out. A cylindrical sun element is provided on a second end of the take-up drum and rotates integrally with the take-up drum. An internal tooth element is provided near the second end of the torsion bar and has an inner peripheral surface opposed to and spaced apart from an outer peripheral surface

of the sun element. One of the outer peripheral surface of the sun element and the inner peripheral surface of the tooth element is a gear surface. The other surface is a deformable member. At least one planet gear is enmeshed with the gear surface and in engagement with the deformable member opposed to the gear surface. The planet gear revolves around the deformable member while biting into the surface of the deformable member to plastically deform the deformable member when the webbing is paid out and cause the sun element and the internal tooth element to rotate relative to each other after the emergency locking member is locked.

Neither Rohrle nor Smithson disclose or suggest a cylindrical sun element and an internal tooth element having an inner peripheral surface opposed to and spaced apart from an outer peripheral surface of the sun element, one of the outer peripheral surface of the sun element and the inner peripheral surface of the internal tooth element being a gear surface, the other surface being formed by a deformable member. The Office Action asserts that Rohrle discloses an internal tooth element at portion of 10 surrounding 40. However, there is no disclosure that the portion of 10 surrounding 40 corresponds to an internal tooth element. Instead, as disclosed in Rohrle at column 2, lines 57-59 the carrier 40 is arranged concentrically to the housing 10 in its interior. The carrier 40 engages here with its bevel shaped recesses 46 over the tongues 36. Furthermore, housing 10 does not correspond to a sun element.

The Office Action recognizes that Rohrle does not disclose that one of the peripheral surface of the sun element and the peripheral surface of the internal tooth element is a gear surface and does not disclose a planet gear in mesh with the gear surface and plastically deforming the deformable member. Applicants traverse the Office Action's assertion that Smithson cures the deficiencies of Rohrle. As discussed above Rohrle does not disclose a sun element. Furthermore, gear wheels 66 of Smithson are not planetary gears. Metal strip 1

does not correspond to either an outer peripheral surface of the sun element or an inner peripheral surface of an internal tooth element. Thus, withdrawal of the rejection is respectfully requested.

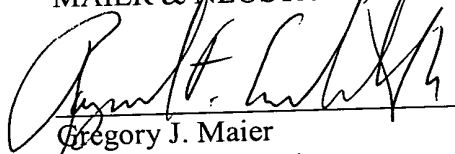
The dependent claims are allowable for at least the reasons discussed above as well as for the individual features they recite.

For the foregoing reasons, it is respectfully submitted that this application is now in condition for allowance. A Notice of Allowance is earnestly solicited.

Should the Examiner deem that any further action is necessary to place this application in even better form for allowance, the Examiner is encouraged to contact the Applicants' undersigned representative at the telephone number listed below.

Respectfully submitted,

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